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Argentina Fights Guerrilla Units

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The government of President Illia has a guerrilla problem on its hands. It is not with a subversive organization, whose ramifications and political intentions are being rigorously probed.

Army and police forces have been entrusted with the removal of the menace.

This is not just uneasy reaction to events in the neighboring territory of Brazil.

Reports have been trickling down here for the past several months of groups of Castro-style bearded revolutionaries being recruited and trained in the hills and woodlands of Salta Province to the far north.

News Develops

These were finally given the stamp of military confirmation by Maj-Gen. Julio Alsogaray, commander of the national gendarmerie, which is the Army's frontier defense force. He has announced that links exist between the guerrilla groups and political contacts in

Brazil, Bolivia, Cuba, and the "national liberation front" in Venezuela.

Previous reports of this suspicious political if not revolutionary activity in Argentina's northwest obtained prominence only on the inside provincial news pages of the metropolitan press.

Tacuara Watched

Today the guerrillas are front-page news, especially the photographs of various arsenals discovered by General Alsogaray's troops.

These have contained principally arms of Soviet manufacture, extending to machine guns, hand grenades and bazookas, with antitank mortars and field radios.

A score of arrests have been made by the gendarmerie following a five-week hunt. Most of them were advanced-in-years university students.

Discoveries of this nature are

not so menacing as they appear, shocking as the disclosures have been.

Argentina is largely a developed country, in its most vulnerable political parts at least, and there could be no surprise seizure of government by guerrilla forces, if these ever accumulated numerical strength.

Complacency has been shattered on this occasion by the disclosure of a general subversive conspiracy, possibly linked with the guerrillas but with left and right extremist associations which now are being investigated in most cities and towns.

Here, again, this is no sudden development. "Tacuara" is the name that has been on and off the lips of most citizens since before the beginning of the year.

Hitherto it had been regarded as an exclusively nationalist organization with strong anti-Semitic bias.

Many of the members were reported sons of well-to-do families and the majority university students.

Brutality Noted

The social background picture still holds but not the idea of Tacuara being completely rightist.

Army and police reports say there are leftist and rightist groups within the organization. In fact, Tacuara members were discovered among the northwestern guerrillas.

In view of these extensive subversive activities — from Patagonia to the Chaco—speculation inevitably arose regarding the financing.

With Castro links proven,

naturally foreign remittances were suspected.

Then one day Minister of Interior Juan S. Palmero was invited to federal police headquarters in Buenos Aires. He, with the Argentine public the day afterward, was astounded at the story told.

For past months people here have been both disturbed and intrigued by the extensive scale and brazen brutality of armed hold-ups.

Several of these involved stolen sums of scores of millions of pesos—and merciless killings.

Political Ends

It now is apparent that Tacuara was responsible for the most revolting of these crimes, to "raise" funds for their political ends.

What are these political ends?

Organized labor is as suspicious as most other sectors of society.

The General Labor Confederation is divided and has its own share of extremists, but officially it strives to maintain a constitutionally responsible front.

At a recent indoor rally in Rosario City, a river port, Tacuara agents penetrated the assembly and fatally shot two trade union leaders on the speakers platform. The assailants escaped.

There have been other political killings—mostly of alleged Communists—by the organization.

The police, however, contend there is just as much evidence that Tacuara is left wing and Marxist.

In any case it is a "movement for national revolution" which obviously recruits desperadoes.